

Out on the 'Town

CLAYTOWN TROUPE

'Out There'

(EMI TCMTL 1066)

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ALCOHOL IMPROVES the Claytown Troupe. The band would agree. They drank themselves through their inaugural 12 months and managed to get thrown off the same Godfathers European tour three times. They might do it on vinyl, but Claytown Troupe don't really mean to sound pompous - it's just that the Claytown personality has never really been captured on tape. Anyway, it's not your job to be as confused as Christian Riou.

Written in Weston-Super-Mare, arranged in New York and beaten into shape supporting the superbly superb Pearl Jam, 'Out There' straddles two definite camps. One relies on Ben Bennett's rigid guitar distortion and Andy Holt's regimented drum chunder. The other unites Riou's vocals and Rick Williams' soundscapes to moodier effect. When Claytown Troupe get it right, 'Out There' is just fine.

A major label switch and lengthy live lay-off have done little to affect the sound. 'Big Wheel' and 'Wanted It All' are typical 'Troupe fodder; a catholic whirly-gig through the band's muddle of influences from Zeppelin to Seattle via the Who and 'Sonic Temple'. Similarly, 'Ways Of Love' (still hanging around on ancient Island Records B-sides) is a fond



CLAYTOWN TROUPE: for instant improvement, just add alcohol

reminder of what Claytown Troupe can do when they think about it.

Elsewhere, 'Out There' is braver and consequently less comfortable. 'How Can Anybody Do This' and 'Magic Dies' are enormous things that frankly stretch Riou's voice beyond its natural threshold. Christian is happiest belting out standard

bootboy sing-a-longs like 'Real Life' and 'Alabama'. Anything deeper soon starts to grate.

'Out There' is Claytown Troupe's 'difficult' second LP. It doesn't ignite like their 'Through The Veil' debut, but it doesn't go to the wall with a bullet in the back of its head either. That's a shame. Life on the fence is a pain in the arse.

CHRIS WATTS